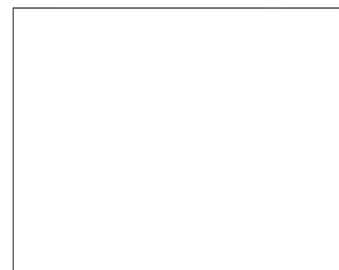


Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

26 April 1985

ARAFAT'S THINKING ON A JORDAN-NON/PLO PALESTINIAN DELEGATION

State Dept. review completed

Summary

PLO Chairman Arafat almost certainly continues to toy with the idea of appointing non-PLO Palestinians to a joint delegation with Jordan to meet with US officials, despite objections from his senior Fatah colleagues. Arafat is looking for individuals not identified with the organization, but who still support PLO interests. Arafat believes some members of the Palestine National Council (PNC) satisfy these criteria. The PNC has long been identified as the PLO's parliament, but not all of its representatives come from the various PLO factions. The Israeli Government, however, would not consider a PNC member to be an acceptable Palestinian representative in talks with the United States.

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Arafat's Views and Fatah Opposition

Since the signing of the 11 February PLO-Jordan accord, PLO officials have been wrestling with the concept of a joint Jordanian/non-PLO Palestinian delegation. King Hussein has tried to convince Arafat that a joint delegation without avowed PLO figures would maximize chances to engage the US more directly in the peace process. The Jordanians believe Arafat was seriously considering potential candidates at the time he left Amman in mid-April for the joint PLO Executive Committee/Fatah Central Committee meeting in Baghdad.

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Israel-Jordan-Palestinian Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 26 April 1985 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments are welcome and should be directed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]

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Arafat apparently encountered stiff opposition to the idea in Baghdad, however, from senior aides who reject any attempt to usurp the PLO's "sole, legitimate role as representative of the Palestinian people." They continue to insist that the PLO must have a direct role in negotiations; they believe appointment of non-PLO Palestinians would be the first step in US-Jordanian plans to eliminate the PLO from future negotiations. The two committees sent a delegation to Amman to explain to Prime Minister Rifai their insistence that PLO figures be included in a negotiating team. [REDACTED]

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Despite opposition from his Fatah colleagues, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Arafat still is considering a joint delegation, in which Palestinian interests would be represented by non-PLO men. [REDACTED] Arafat believes a non-PLO contingent headed by PNC Chairman Abd al-Hamid Sayih might mollify Fatah hardliners. [REDACTED]

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Sayih's Appeal

Arafat probably has proposed the PNC chairman because he feels assured of Sayih's support for his policies. Sayih was Arafat's choice to replace the former pro-Syrian chairman, Khalid Fahum, at last November's controversial PNC session in Amman. Sayih presumably believes Arafat was correct in making his break from Syria and the Syrian-allied Palestinian radicals. [REDACTED]

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Sayih also satisfies several other qualifications that Arafat considers tactically important. Sayih is a moderate Palestinian leader, who has maintained his independence over the years from all PLO factions. He also has preserved his ties to the West Bank--he comes from Nablus--despite his deportation by the Israelis in 1968. The US Consul in Jerusalem reports that West Bank Palestinians have taken great pride in Sayih's appointment to the PNC. [REDACTED]

Arafat's potential willingness to allow Sayih to represent the Palestinians in initial discussions probably would encourage the Jordanians, but may not completely allay Amman's concerns. King Hussein and his colleagues probably retain some doubts about whether a PNC member qualifies as a non-PLO Palestinian, given that the PNC is often described as "the supreme authority of the PLO." [REDACTED]

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Is the PNC the PLO?

The PNC has long been labeled the PLO's parliament; it is responsible for formulating policies and programs for the organization. Documents dating from the PLO's establishment in 1964 which refer to the PNC, however, suggest that the PNC was designed to have a broader representation including figures not associated with PLO components. Article 21 of the PLO's constitution specifically states that half of the PNC members

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[REDACTED]

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will be "elected directly by the Palestinian people" and that the other half will be "elected from the commands of the Organization." [REDACTED]

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The PLO, as the largest constituent party in the PNC, most often gets its way in matters of policy. Since 1969 Arafat's Fatah has dominated the PLO and therefore Arafat has been able to manipulate the PNC on the really crucial issues. Over the years, however, independent members of the PNC have tried to maintain at least a cosmetic separation from the PLO. Many consciously remain apart from the PLO so they can live in or travel to and from the United States and Israeli-occupied territories. [REDACTED]

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Israeli Interpretation of PNC Membership

Israeli officials do not distinguish between representatives of the PNC who belong to one of the eight PLO factions and those who are labeled independents. In their view, PNC membership automatically gives one PLO membership, particularly since the PLO dominates the council's decisionmaking. [REDACTED]

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The Israelis would not see PNC Chairman Sayih as an acceptable candidate for talks with US officials. They would view such a dialogue as a breach of US promises not to talk to the PLO until it accepts UN Resolution 242, renounces terrorism and acknowledges Israel's right to exist. They would argue against Sayih because he participated in the mid-April meetings in Baghdad of the PLO Executive Committee and the Fatah Central Committee. Such action, in Tel Aviv's view, destroys any claim of independence Sayih may have and puts the PNC chairman clearly in the PLO camp. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Arafat's Thinking on a Jordanian-non/PLO
Palestinian Delegation

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